Multiculturalism and Women's Employment: a Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

This paper analyses the patterns and determinants of female labour force participation from a sociological perspective. Using a relatively recent database, the present analysis updates existing knowledge and evaluates prior research regarding the market employment of women, particularly in the multiethnic and multicultural context. The analysis is based on research conducted in Australia, where there is a substantial proportion of European-ancestry populations. The article also provides some cross-national comparisons with other multicultural settings. The results of this paper are based on logistic regression analysis. The results suggest that human capital and family formation appear to play as the most fundamental determinants in women's market employment. The results also suggest that while native-born women are generally more benefited in the labour market, the native-foreigner differentials regarding the employment patterns and determinants tend to be mainly associated with ethnic origin and length of residence in the destination country.

Introduction

Social scientists, sociologists and demographers have given substantially increasing attention to female labour force participation during recent years, with interest in the significant interplay between women's work status, women's autonomy and demographic factors such as family formation (marriage patterns), fertility, migration and mortality (e.g. Ware 1981; Davis 1984; Chesnais 1996; Rosenfeld 1996; Dharmalingam and Morgan 1996; Riley 1997, 1998; McDonald 2000; United Nations 2001; Riley and McCarthy 2003; Drovandi and Silvanai 2004; Foroutan 2006, 2011a). By interlinking demographic and gender issues, including women's participation in the labour market, the United Nations (2001: 49) documented that 'researchers are increasingly paying attention to gender issues in the collection and analysis of

demographic, social and economic data'. The well-known demographer, Kingsley Davis (1984: 397), explained the substantial changes in gender roles reflected in female labour market behaviour as part of 'a more important social revolution, a revolution in sex roles'. According to Davis 'in industrial societies, it used to be that a women would be asked what her husband does for a living. Now, increasingly, men are being asked what their wives do' (Davis 1984: 397). In fact, the increasing trend in female labour force participation is one of the most important characteristics of labour markets throughout the world, particularly in developed countries such that this increasing trend has been viewed as 'one of the fundamental facts of gender relations in this century' (Cotter et al. 2001: 430).

This article aims to highlight the major results from an empirical analysis conducted in the multiethnic and multicultural context of Australia. Using a relatively recently available national database, the present analysis also aims to update existing knowledge and evaluates prior studies (see below) regarding women's employment. More specifically, this analysis addresses the following key questions: what are the major employment patterns of native-born and overseas-born women? Do the employment patterns of native-born and overseas-born women differ? How significant are the employment differentials of native-born and overseas-born women? What are the most important determinants of these employment differentials? From a comparative perspective, how differently are the employment levels of native-born women and those of overseas-born women associated specifically with human capital and family formation? What are the main employment differentials of overseas-born women by ethnic origin? How can we explain the economic settlement of female migrants in the multicultural setting of Australia? The present analysis also partly provides cross-national comparisons with other multicultural settings.

Background

This section briefly outlines the major findings of prior studies regarding women's employment, especially in the Australian context. The significant association between women's work outside the home and family formation characteristics has been markedly documented in prior studies (e.g. Miller and Volker 1983; Evans 1984, 1996; Brooks and Volker 1985; Young 1990; Miller 1996; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996; Wooden and VandenHeuvel 1997; Kahanec and Mendola 2007; Foroutan 2011a). The importance of family

features on women's employment has also been reflected in the 'double peak pattern' termed by the United Nations (2000), suggesting that women are very likely to enter the labour market in their early twenties and that many will come back to the labour market after childbearing responsibilities[1]. However, the magnitude of the effects of family factors on women's employment is subject to cultural and normative contexts determining the issue of priority for either work or family. Australian women's' labour force participation in the middle 1990s, for instance, was found to be normatively supported: "Australians' ideals are for full-time homemaking while there are pre-school children in the home … and for part-time employment while there are school age children" (Evans 1996: 78). In a cross-national study, the employment participation of women in Australia was found to be more affected by family characteristics than that of women in both the USA and Canada. A higher value was attached to family life and a lower value on employment outside the home were the possible explanation for this employment pattern of women in Australia and their difference with women in the two other multicultural settings[2] (Brusentsev 2002).

The literature also shows a significant connection between educational attainment and women's employment participation (e.g. Richmond 1974; Evans 1984, 1988; Brooks and Volker 1985; Santow 1990; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996; Gregory 2002; Cob-Clark 2003; Kler 2006; Adsera and Chiswick 2007; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007). However, prior studies have clearly shown that the economic return of educational attainment is significantly higher for native-born than for overseas-born. For example, Wooden and Robertson (1989) and Jones and McAllister (1991) showed that the probability of unemployment for women whose qualifications are gained abroad rather than in Australia is higher. It has also been asserted that 'Australian schooling and qualifications produce greater economic benefits for those who possess them, compared to similar attainments and qualifications gained overseas' (McAllister (1995: 456). This native-migrant differential pattern has been mainly explained as a consequence of the lack of recognition of qualifications gained abroad and

[1] However, it should be also noted that the double peak pattern is no longer as prevalent as it was in the past because 'women are finding ways to combine family responsibilities with market work' (United Nations 2000: 111).

[2] It is, however, acknowledged that besides the cultural differences in values attached to family and employment, these cross-national differences in women's employment can also be partly due to institutional and political variations in employment characteristics (such as availability of part-time work, pay rates etc.).

the lower value of overseas qualifications in Australia; a pattern that particularly applies to non-English-speaking-background immigrants (e.g. Evans and Kelley 1986; Iredale 1988; Wooden and Robertson 1989; Hugo 1992, 1995; Chapman and Iredale 1993; McAllister 1995; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996; Hawthorne 2002; Foroutan 2008b).

There is a large body of literature showing that the status and settlement of immigrants is positively associated with the length of residence in the destination country so that their disadvantaged situation in the early period of settlement will vanish with a longer residence in the destination country (e.g. Evans 1984; Ackland 1992; Wooden 1994; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996, 1999; Khoo and McDonald 2001; Foroutan 2008a). A time period of about ten years has been found as a basis for the settlement and success of most migrant groups in Australia (Khoo and McDonald 2001). In a cross-national comparison, it is worthwhile noting that the duration of residence in the destination country has also been found as a leading determinant of employment for immigrant women in the United States where those living there 'for less than fifteen years, are less likely than the natives to participate in the paid labour force' (Read 2004: 71). Also, a more recent study has found that after around eighteen years living in the destination country, European immigrants' earnings catch-up to those of the native-born (Adsera and Chiswick 2007). Prior research has also shown that male migrants benefit more from a longer stay in the destination country than female migrants; which has particularly been the case for those migrants with non-English-speaking-backgrounds (e.g. Brooks and Volker 1985; Inglis and Stromback 1986; Wooden and Robertson 1989; Ackland 1992; Foroutan 2008a,b). This gender difference has been explained by the fact that 'for immigrant men but not women, years in Australia is generally equivalent to years in the Australian labour market' (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996: 8).

English language competency has also been found in prior research as a leading determinant of the employment of female migrants (e.g. Evans 1984; Brooks and Volker 1985; Inglis and Stromback 1986; Wooden and Robertson 1989; Young 1990; Hugo 1992, 1995; Wooden 1994; Chiswick, Lee and Miller 2004, 2006; Kler 2006; Foroutan 2008a). The disadvantaged circumstances of migrant women in the labour market of the destination country have also been partly explained as a consequence of the lack of English language skills. For instance, female migrants with poor English background in Australia were

found to be 'twice as likely as those women who only spoke English (the comparison category) to be unemployed rather than employed' (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996: 21). It is interesting to note that because of the vital role of English skills in immigrants' life and work, they are often classified into English-speaking-background (ESB) and non-English-speaking-background (NESB) immigrants characterised by two different patterns of employment in the destination country. For instance, Wooden (1994), VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1996) and Shamsuddin (1998) showed that the participation of migrant women with English-speaking-backgrounds in the Australian labour market is greater, more successful and proficient compared with migrant women from non-English-speaking countries.

It is important to mention that the literature also emphasises the fact that there are significant interlinks between some of the characteristics affecting women's employment, which have been partly revealed in the review above. For example, it has been documented that educational attainment, English skill and length of stay in the destination country are markedly correlated (e.g. Evans 1984; Wooden 1994; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999; Khoo and McDonald 2001; Foroutan 2008c).

Data, method and definition

This paper employs customized tabulations from the 2001 Australian Census Population and Housing, dealing with approximately 5.4 million women in the main working ages.[3] The tables are matrices of relevant variables cross-classified against each other. The matrix or cell data are converted to individual records in SPSS format. This study uses logistic regression analysis, which provides the opportunity to examine employment patterns while simultaneously controlling for other relevant characteristics.

In this analysis, female labour force participation is defined by two key components. (1) *Employment status* refers to a situation in which women are either 'employed' or 'not employed'. (2) *Occupational levels*, classified into high and lower occupations, refers to major groupings of jobs in which women have been employed. Appendices 1 and 2 provide more details about the definition and classification of characteristics included in this analysis. It is

[3] Based on the composition of overseas-born women aged 15-54 by individual country of birth, the classification of regions of origin in the original database used here was developed. Also, this paper aims to compare the employment of Australian-born women with that of overseas-born women. Accordingly, the same age range (that is, 15-54) has been used for both Australian-born and overseas-born women in this paper to keep the consistency and accuracy of the comparisons.

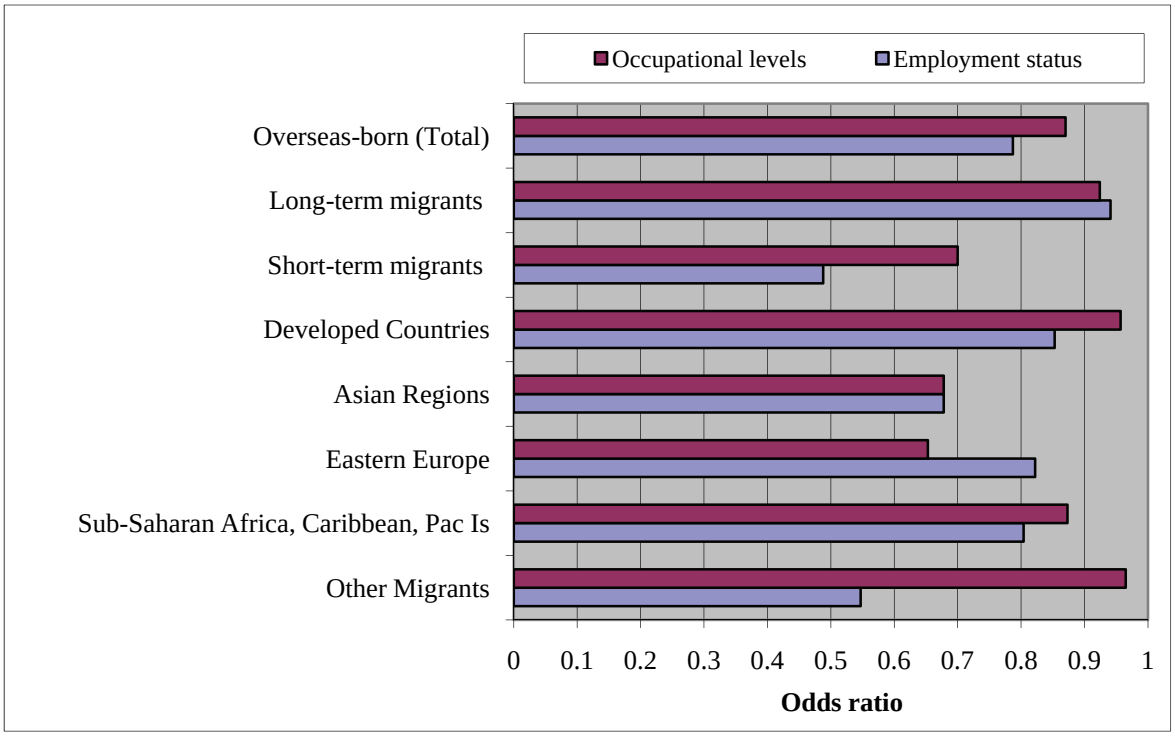
important to mention that these classifications are constrained by the original database used in the present analysis. Appendix 2 provides more details about the definition and classification of characteristics included in this analysis.

The main employment patterns

This section describes the major employment patterns of women observed in this analysis. The discussion is based on the multivariate results of the present analysis, shown in Figure 1. The results highlight the major employment patterns, while a number of the most important characteristics influencing female labour force participation are simultaneously held constant in the analysis. The characteristics include human capital (educational attainment and English proficiency), family factors (presence of young children at home, age of the youngest child, couple status and partner's income), duration of residence in the destination country and age composition. Five major patterns with regard to the employment of women are found. First, native-born women both are more likely to be employed and are more likely to work in the high occupations (professionals and managers) compared with overseas-born women. Second, the employment differentials between native-born and overseas-born women tend to disappear when the former have been in the destination country for a time period of more than ten years: while the short-term female migrants (with a residency of ten years or less in the destination country) are less likely than native-born women to be employed and to work in high occupations, the length of stay of more than ten years in the destination country puts female migrants in an almost equal circumstance as the native-born women in terms of both employment status (to be employed) and occupational levels (to work in the professional and managerial occupations). Third, the differences between native-born and overseas-born women in relation to level of employment vary significantly by the region of birth for the latter. For instance, while Other Migrants (mostly female migrants from the Middle East & North Africa, and from Greece and Turkey; see Appendix 1) and female migrants from Asian regions are less likely than native-born women to be employed, the employment level for female migrants from Developed Countries (mainly migrant women from the United Kingdom and New Zealand; see Appendix 1) and from Eastern Europe is relatively closer to that of native-born women.

Fourth, the patterns associated with occupational differentials between native-born and overseas-born women by region of birth reveal the fact that most groups of overseas-born women are almost as likely as native-born women

Figure 1 The probability of 'being employed' and of 'working in the high occupations' for migrant women aged 15-54 in Australia by duration of residence in Australia and region of birth relative to native-born women aged 15-54



Source: Customized tables from the 2001 Australian Census of Population and housing (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Also, see the section of 'Data, method and definition' in this article.
Notes: (1) In employment status, 'employed' is coded as 1 (one) and 'not employed' is coded as 0 (zero) and the numbers (odds ratios) show the likelihood of being 'employed' for each category of migrant women relative to the reference group (that is, Australian-born women). (2) In occupational levels, 'working in high occupations' (professionals and managers) is coded as 1 (one) and 'working not in high occupations' (that is, other occupations) is coded as 0 (zero) and the numbers (odds ratios) show the likelihood of working in the 'high occupations' for each category of migrant women relative to the reference group (that is, Australian-born women). (3) See Appendix 2 for classification and definition of characteristics included in this figure. (4) Appendix 1 presents the major countries of birth by region of origin. (5) Notes 2 and 5 in Table 1 and note 2 in Table 2 also apply to this figure.

to be employed in professional and managerial occupations. A very interesting observation here is the case of Other Migrants (mostly migrant women from the Middle East & North Africa, and from Greece and Turkey; see Appendix 1): while this group of migrant women are half as likely as native-born women to be employed (that is, holding the lowest employment level amongst female migrants relative to native-born women), they are almost as likely as native-born women to work in high occupations (that is, holding the highest probability of being employed in the professional and managerial occupations amongst female migrants relative to native-born women). This pattern of

employment might be partly explained by the selectivity hypothesis[4], suggesting that those women who could overcome the employment barriers, including household-related difficulties such as child care or possible socio-cultural barriers by family and community, limiting women's activity outside the home are then likely to be selective of those for whom employment is more worthwhile, that is, those who gain employment in a high-level occupation. This explanation tends to be particularly the case for Other Migrants who are mostly from the Middle East & North Africa and from Greece and Turkey (see Appendix 1). These regions (particularly, the Middle East & North Africa) are identified by a set of socio-cultural characteristics associated with gender roles such as patriarchy (Yasmeen 2004), 'the male breadwinner model' versus 'the gender equity model' (McDonald 2000) and a relatively lower rate of female labour force participation (Omran and Roudi 1993; Foroutan 2008c, 2011b). This explanation could be more appropriately understood by taking this fact into consideration that although 'new information and new opportunities produce pressure for change…' (Dharmalingam and Morgan 1996: 201) and 'women, especially educated women, often leave their origin to free themselves from traditional controls' (Hugo 2000: 297), the maintenance of the subordination of women and other types of traditional roles and structures predominant in the origin remains important after migration because 'migration of women does not necessarily initiate a change in their role and status' (Hugo 2000: 300).

Fifth, the occupational pattern highlighted above for most overseas-born women applies neither to Eastern European nor to Asian female migrants. These two groups of migrant women are less likely to be employed in professional and managerial occupations relative to native-born women. This occupational pattern provides empirical evidence for the 'family investment model' in which immigrants' wives participate in the labour market by accepting 'dead-end jobs' as complementary efforts to promote their husbands' human capital investments (Baker and Benjamin 1997). This explanation for occupational status appears to be particularly the case for Eastern European female migrants because, as highlighted before, their employment level is significantly high.

Economic return of schooling: the native-overseas differentials

Generally speaking, the results of this analysis, illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, show that the employment of women is significantly associated with

[4] The term *the selectivity hypothesis* has been suggested by Professor Peter McDonald, The Australian National University, as a suitable explanation for the observed patterns in this analysis during discussion with him on the findings.

Table 1 The probability of 'being employed' (odds ratios) for women aged 15-54 in Australia by birthplace and selected characteristics, 2001

Characteristics	Native-born	Overseas-born (Total)	Developed Countries	Asian Regions	Eastern Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean, Pacific Is.	Other Migrants
Young children at home							
0-2 years	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
3-7 years	2.168	1.993	2.050	1.785	2.182	2.226	1.930
8 years or more	4.400	3.863	4.299	3.133	4.081	4.052	3.899
No children	7.021	4.887	5.741	3.974	4.832	5.755	5.700
Educational attainment							
Low education	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Middle education	3.667	1.728	2.162	1.568	1.455	2.215	1.420
High education	10.584	3.238	4.585	3.003	2.609	4.792	3.635
Length of stay in Australia							
10 years or less			*	*	*	*	*
More than 10 years			1.438	2.184	1.518	1.709	1.864
English competency (Not well)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Well	1.967	1.747	1.764	1.679	2.090	1.644	1.999
Very well	1.390	3.633	3.905	2.514	3.011	2.653	4.383
Partner's income and couple status							
Low income	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Middle income	2.000	2.262	2.063	2.077	3.366	1.898	2.841
High income	1.957	2.007	1.860	1.778	2.925	1.735	2.958
No partner	0.971	1.115	1.139	0.916	1.244	1.036	1.212
Age groups (15-24 years)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
25-34 years	1.409	2.124	1.574	2.551	1.841	1.803	1.591
35-44 years	1.371	2.320	1.486	2.635	1.895	1.866	1.524
45-54 years	1.014	1.846	1.084	1.976	1.203	1.475	1.223
Number of valid cases	3,491,813	1,188,880	565,362	340,443	79,333	78,878	73,859

Source: See Figure 1. *****: Reference group **Notes:** (1) In each model of this table, the dependent variable is 'employment status' in which 'employed' is coded as 1 (one) and 'not employed' is coded as 0 (zero) and the numbers (odds ratios) show the likelihood of being 'employed' relative to the reference group. (2) This table excludes those women whose education, English proficiency, partner's income, year of arrival in Australia, birthplace and employment status are 'not stated'. It also excludes those who are 'still at school'. (3) See Appendix 2 for classification and definition of characteristics included in this table. (4) Appendix 1 presents the major countries of birth by region of origin. (5) This table is obtained from a file, which is partly affected by the issue of confidentiality caused by a large number of cross tabulations and small numbers in the cells of Super Table.

Table 2 The probability of 'working in professionals and managers' for employed women aged 15-54 in Australia by birthplace and selected characteristics, (odds ratios)

Characteristics	Native-born (1)	Overseas-born (Total) (2)	Developed Countries (3)	Asian Regions (4)	Eastern Europe (5)	Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean, Pacific Is. (6)	Other Migrants (7)
Young children at home							
0-2 years	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
3-7 years	0.948	0.858	0.889	0.816	0.847	0.915	0.768
8 years or more	0.954	0.882	0.882	0.866	0.884	0.897	0.832
No children	1.164	1.033	1.049	0.995	0.978	1.072	0.909
Educational attainment							
Low education	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Middle education	2.088	1.414	1.705	1.178	2.051	2.617	1.236
High education	20.995	9.328	14.197	6.097	13.036	20.734	7.590
Length of stay in Australia							
10 years or less			*	*	*	*	*
More than 10 years			1.055	1.599	1.167	1.150	1.209
English competency							
Not well	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Well	0.865	1.214	1.144	1.244	2.574	0.894	1.375
Very well	1.261	2.789	2.757	2.081	6.662	2.282	2.302
Age groups							
15-24 years	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
25-44 years	2.477	2.136	2.496	1.529	1.876	2.400	1.883
45-54 years	2.765	2.232	2.512	1.483	1.914	2.458	1.934
Number of valid cases	2,421,777	725,462	385,019	183,144	46,970	51,933	30,495

Source: See Figure 1. *****: Reference group

Notes: (1) In each model of this table, the dependent variable is 'occupational levels' in which 'working in high occupations' (professionals and managers) is coded as 1 (one) and 'working not in high occupations' (that is, other occupations) is coded as 0 (zero) and the numbers (odds ratios) show the likelihood of being employed in the 'high occupations' relative to the reference group. (2) This table excludes those women whose education, English proficiency, partner's income, year of arrival in Australia, birthplace and occupation are 'not stated', 'unclassifiable' or 'inadequately described'. It also excludes those who are 'still at school'. (3) See Appendix 2 for classification and definition of characteristics included in this table. (4) Appendix 1 presents the major countries of birth by region of origin. (5) In the original database used here, in order to maximise the number of cells that could be obtained from many cross-tabulations for multivariate analyses, 'partner's income & couple status' as a relatively less important variable was excluded in the analysis of 'occupational levels'. (6) Note 6 in Table 1 also applies to this table.

educational attainment. This means that highly educated women are significantly more likely both to be employed and to work in high occupations (professionals and managers) than those holding the lower levels of education. These findings accord with prior studies asserting education as 'a significant predictor of women's employment' (Read 2004: 55) and as a fundamental factor to 'explain part of occupational stratification' (Sorensen 1993: 4). In fact, from a comparative perspective, the results of this analysis show that educational attainment clearly accounts for the most important determinant of the employment of native-born women relative to other characteristics included in this analysis (see Tables 1 and 2).

However, according to the results of the present analysis, it is evident that the employment of native-born women benefits more substantially from educational attainment than that of overseas-born women. This differential pattern could be partly explained by the fact that not only do 'Australian schooling and qualifications produce greater economic benefits for those who possess them, compared to similar attainments and qualifications gained overseas' (McAllister 1995: 456) but also, overseas qualifications are likely to be unrecognised and less-valued in Australia, as discussed in the literature review. Moreover, the results of this analysis show that the economic return of educational attainment for migrant women varies by region of birth. For example, the employment level of migrant women from Developed Countries benefits more considerably from educational attainment, compared with the employment level of migrant women from Asian regions and from Eastern Europe. This pattern provides empirical evidence to update prior research in which qualifications obtained from non-English-speaking countries are more likely to be unrecognised and less valued in the destination country (e.g. Evans and Kelley 1986; Iredale 1988; Hugo 1992, 1995; Chapman and Iredale 1993; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996; Hawthorne 2002; Foroutan 2008a).

Work and family: A matter of priority?

The empirical findings of the present analysis support the importance of family formation characteristics in women's employment. This is particularly the case in relation to the effects of the presence of young children at home and the age of the youngest child at home. Indeed, the age of the youngest child is recognized as a factor that has 'possibly the most important single influence in female participation' in the labour market. According to the results of this analysis, while women with children aged 0-2 years at home are the least likely

to be employed, the absence of young children at home provides an exceptional opportunity for women's work outside the home so that women with no young children at home are the most likely to be employed. Further, the results show that the older the child, the greater the likelihood of being employed. These general observations apply to all women, either native-born or overseas-born and irrespective of region of birth for the latter. However, the findings show that the employment status of native-born women is more significantly affected by these family characteristics than that of overseas-born women (see Table 1). This provides empirical evidence for prior research documenting the fact that the labour force participation of female migrants is less responsive to family characteristics than that of the native-born.

Furthermore, although the effects of family characteristics are stronger on the employment status of native-born women than that of all groups of female migrants, it is evident that the gap varies by migrant women's region of birth. This might be partly explained by the differential pattern of English-speaking-background and non-English-speaking-background migrants, which has also been asserted in the studies reviewed before. According to the results of the present analysis, this explanation is particularly the case for migrant women from Asian regions and from Developed Countries: the employment status of the latter is more affected by the presence of young children at home and the age of the youngest child at home; whereas these family factors have relatively lower effects on the employment status of the former. However, an evident exception to this explanation is the case of Other Migrants who are mostly migrant women from the Middle East & North Africa and from Greece and Turkey, whose employment level is as significantly affected as that of migrant women from Developed Countries by these factors (see Table 1 and Appendix 1). In fact, it should be stated that the effects of these family factors on the employment status of all of these groups of women, whether native-born or overseas-born and irrespective of region of birth, are still significantly high. This suggests that the strong association between family formation characteristics and women's employment status persists beyond the influence of migration status and ethnic diversity. The patterns also support a higher value attached to family life rather than to employment outside the home amongst women in Australia, especially for native-born women, as has also been asserted in the preceding cross-national research reviewed earlier (Brusentsev 2002).

The results of this analysis also show that despite the substantial effects of the presence of young children at home and the age of the youngest child at home on employment status, women's occupational levels are not significantly associated with these family factors (see Table 2). These two different consequences of family factors on the first and the second stages of employment (that is, employment status and occupational levels) might be partly interpreted using the previously-mentioned selectivity hypothesis: those women, both native-born and overseas-born, who have overcome the employment obstructions are likely to be selective of those for whom employment is more worthwhile, that is, those who obtain employment in a high-level occupation.

The economic settlement of female migrants: determinants and differentials

On the basis of the multivariate findings of this analysis, illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, the following discussion explains the role of two most important determinants of the economic settlement of migrant women in Australia: English skill and length of residence in the destination country. Consistent with the literature observing English skill as a key that 'opens the door to a wide range of socio-economic and cultural possibilities for the migrant' (McAllister 1986: 24), the results of the present analysis show a significant effect of English competency on the economic settlement and success of migrant women. According to the results of this analysis, the more proficient in English, the greater the probability of both employment level and working in the professional and managerial occupations. The results also show that in contrast to educational attainment, the differences associated with the effects of English competency on the first and the second stages of employment (of migrant women are small (see Tables 1 and 2). This perhaps reflects the vital role of English competency in migrants' economic settlement and success. Furthermore, the following discussion can partly explain the different patterns highlighted above in relation to the effects of English competency and educational attainment in the two stages of employment: on the one side, English skill tends to remain almost always as a basic requirement for both the first and the second stages of employment. On the other side, while migrant women are required to have a recognised high qualification in order to occupy a high-level occupation, they may simply enter the labour market by accepting jobs which are lower relative to their educational level. This explanation also partly sits well with 'family investment model' discussed earlier.

Those who have been in the destination country for more than ten years are almost as likely as native-born women both to be employed and to work in the professional and managerial occupations. These results showing the substantial outcome of duration of residence in the destination country provide empirical evidence to update prior research and to support the settlement and success of migrant groups in Australia mainly as 'a matter of time'. These results more specifically, support the fact that the disadvantaged situation of most migrants in Australia during the early period of settlement 'tends to disappear over a period of about ten years' (Khoo and McDonald 2001: 88). Also, the results of this analysis show that length of stay in the destination country has a relatively stronger effect in the first stage of migrant women's employment rather than in the second stage. This pattern perhaps echoes the fact that highly-skilled people are more likely to be able to occupy high-level occupations faster. According to the results, the magnitude of the effect of duration of residence in the destination country on the employment of migrant women is also associated with region of birth. This can by partly explained by the 'cultural distance' (Berry 1992) of the origin and the destination countries. This, for instance, can be supported by two more evident patterns observed in this analysis: on the one side, length of stay in the destination country has a relatively less significant effect on the employment level of migrant women from Developed Countries with less differences with the Australian cultural context. On the other side, the employment level of female migrants from Asian regions and Other Migrants with a relatively greater cultural distance with Australia, benefits somewhat more significantly from a longer residence in the destination country (see Table 1). Accordingly, these results emphasise that the length of stay in the host country, as a leading facilitator of settlement and assimilation of immigrants, plays a more important role in the assimilation and economic settlement of migrants facing greater cultural distance in the destination country relative to their own origin country. This is also the case because the 'migration of women does not necessarily initiate a change in their role and status' (Hugo 2000: 300). In a cross-national comparison between the results of this study conducted in Australia and the results of a study in the United States (Read 2004) and a more recent study amongst European immigrants (Adsera and Chiswick 2007) reviewed before, it is worthwhile noting that the economic settlement of migrant women in Australia tends to

require a relatively shorter period of time. This can be partly explained as an economic consequence of Australia's skilled migration policies.

Concluding remarks

Using the results of an empirical research based on a relatively recent national database, this article has highlighted the major observations associated with women's employment patterns and determinants in the multiethnic and multicultural setting of Australia. It has also addressed the employment differentials by migration status and ethnic origin. The results of this analysis have confirmed earlier studies that native-born women are more likely to be employed than their overseas-born counterparts. Further investigation, however, has revealed that this native-migrant employment differential is significantly associated with time. This means that there is no significant employment difference between native-born women and long-term residents (female migrants who have been in Australia for more than ten years): the latter are nearly as likely as the former to be employed. These long-term residents have also been found to have the same opportunity as native-born women to work in the professional and managerial occupations. These observations, in turn, echo the significant consequence of duration of residence in the destination country on the economic settlement of migrant women in the destination country. Perhaps more importantly, they highlight the problems faced by new migrants in immediately moving to full / high employment. This has policy implications which need to be acknowledged, since migrants are expected to be up and running post-haste.

Among other characteristics included in this analysis, educational attainment tends to cause a more important outcome on the employment of native-born women. Also, the employment success of native-born women benefits more significantly from educational attainment than that of overseas-born women especially those from non-English-speaking countries whose overseas qualifications have been documented in the literature to be more likely to be unrecognised or less-valued in Australia. English language competency and length of stay in the destination country has been observed as two leading determinants of migrant women's economic settlement in this analysis. The small differences related to the effects of English competency on employment status and on the occupational levels partly echo the vital role of English skill in the economic settlement of migrant women in Australia. The positive effect of duration of residence in the destination country on the employment of migrant

women in Australia varies by birthplace. Using the term 'cultural distance' (Berry 1992), this variation has been partly explained as a consequence of the fact that length of stay in the host country, that is, the leading facilitator of settlement and assimilation of migrant groups, plays a more important role in the economic settlement of those groups of migrant women who face a greater cultural distance in Australia.

The strong influence of the presence of young children at home and the age of the youngest child at home on employment status has been found in this analysis as a more evident observation for native-born women than for overseas-born women. However, the significant association between these family factors and the employment status of women persists beyond the influence of migration status (that is, either native-born or overseas-born) and ethnic origin. These observations provide empirical evidence for prior cross-national research attributing a higher value attached to family life rather than to employment outside the home amongst women in Australia compared with women in Canada and the United States (Brusentsev 2002).[5] This suggests that, as working women, particularly during the reproductive period and those having younger children at home, have duties both within and outside of the home (*the dual burden*), further appropriate work policies and arrangements tend to be important to make the labour market more compatible for women's paid work and to deliver more appropriately gender equity in the labour market.

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[5] Also, see the footnote no. 2.

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Appendix 1 Migrant women aged 15-54 in Australia by major country of birth and region of origin

Region of origin & Country of birth	%	Region of origin & Country of birth	%
Developed Countries	**48.86**	**Asian Regions**	**30.47**
United Kingdom	44.13	China	23.79
New Zealand	20.51	Vietnam	16.98
Western Europe	9.04	Philippines	14.02
Southern Europe	8.55	Malaysia	8.71
Northern America	4.66	India	7.48
Others	13.11	Indonesia	5.08
Total	100.00	Sri Lanka	4.73
Eastern Europe	**6.96**	Singapore	3.66
Eastern Europe	34.40	Thailand	3.25
Yugoslavia Federal Republic	17.19	Others	12.31
FYR. of Macedonia	15.75	Total	100.00
Croatia	14.56	**Other Migrants**	**6.71**
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9.31	Lebanon	30.49
Romania	4.58	Greece	24.22
Others	4.21	Turkey	12.96
Total	100.00	Egypt	9.60
Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Pacific Is.	**7.00**	Cyprus	6.53
Polynesia (excluding Hawaii)	33.05	Syria	2.92
South Africa	31.02	Israel	2.34
Melanesia	13.29	Sudan	1.62
Mauritius	6.71	Others	9.32
Zimbabwe	5.37	Total	100.00
Kenya	2.76		
Zambia	1.51		
Caribbean	1.34		
Others	4.95	Grand Total (%)	**100.00**
Total	100.00	**Grand Total** (Number)	1,298,179

Source: See Figure 1.

Notes: (1) This table excludes those women whose birthplace is 'not stated' or 'inadequately described'. (2) The classification for the regions of origin is based on the original database used in this analysis. (3) It should be noted that in the classification of regions of birth in the original database used here, Japan and the Koreas were included in the category of 'Developed Countries'.

Appendix 2 Definition and classification of characteristics included in this analysis

Characteristics	Classification	Definition & categories
Birthplace	Native-born	Anyone whose country of birth was stated as Australia in the census (Australian-born).
	Overseas-born	Anyone who was stated as overseas-born in the census.
Length of residence in Australia	Long-term resident	Any overseas-born woman who has been in Australia for more than 10 years (in the time of the census).
	Short-term resident	Any overseas-born woman who has been in Australia for 10 years or less (in the time of the census).
Employment status	Employed	Employee, employer, own account worker, and contributing family worker.
	Not employed	Unemployed looking for full-time/ part-time work, not in labour force.
Occupational levels	High occupations	Professionals, and associate professionals, managers and administrators.
	Lower occupations	All other occupations other than 'the High Occupations', as defined above.
Educational attainment	High education	Postgraduate degree, Graduate diploma and Graduate certificate, Bachelor degree, Advanced diploma and Diploma level.
	Middle education	Year 9-12 or equivalent, certificate level.
	Low education	Did not go to school, Year 8 or below.
English proficiency	Very well	Only speak English, Speak English very well.
	Well	Speak English well.
	Not well	Speak English not well.
Couple status	Living with partner	Here, living with a partner (partnered) includes husband, wife in a registered marriage,
	Not living with partner	and partner in a de-facto marriage (opposite sex).

Note: It is important to consider that the classification of these characteristics is based on the original database used in this analysis.